

## **DOP, DPW, AND BIT DEFEND FY 2020 BUDGET REQUESTS**

**Date :** July 1, 2019

ST. CROIX--The Committee on Finance, chaired by Senator Kurt Vialet, continued consideration of the Government's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget proposal on Monday in the UVI Great Hall, Albert Sheen Campus, St. Croix. The Committee took testimony from the Division of Personnel (DOP), Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Bureau of Information Technology (BIT).

Dayna Clendinen, Director of the Division of Personnel said the FY 2020 recommended budget is \$42,227,027 less \$23,110 from the Training Revolving Fund Revenue. The recommended budget is funded by the General Fund and \$530,867 is from the Indirect Cost Fund.

According to Clendinen, Personnel Service is \$2.5 million; Fringe is \$1 million; Supplies is \$41,000; Other Services and Charges is \$39 million; Utilities is \$171,000; and Capital Outlay is \$54,000. She added that Other Services and Charges Category and Health Insurance is \$37.4 million. She pointed out that the Agency's FEMA Project Worksheets Public Assistance for repairs total approximately \$439,255.63.

Regarding Medical and Dental costs, Clendinen said that the FY 2019 is estimated at approximately \$154,443,162. To date, they have paid a total of \$102,885,432 in healthcare premiums. Of this amount, \$62,399,915 is the Government's portion, and \$40,435,516 is the Employee and Retiree's share.

Director Clendinen indicated that DOP employs, 44 individuals; 31 employees are in the District of St. Thomas/St. John and 13 in the District of St. Croix; of the 44 employees, 14 of them are represented by a union, 16 are classified as non-union and 14 are exempt.

The Committee was told that as of May 31, 2019, the Government's Group Health Insurance plan has approximately 13,941 participants, which includes active Government employees and retirees from the three branches and semi-autonomous and autonomous entities. Furthermore, there are 7,124 active employees and 6,817 retirees enrolled under the plan. She added that when considering the dependent population, the plan covers more than 30,000 members.

An important factor discussed in the Committee was the Government's Donated Leave Program. According to the DOP Director, the law allows Government employees who are suffering from a health condition or injury and is expected to require a prolonged absence from work to receive donated sick or annual leave.

She added that from October 1, 2018, through May 31, 2019, they had a total of 134 approvals amounting to \$627,486.17. During the same period, they had a total of 15 disapproval. Currently, they have 30 employees for a total of \$202,172.22. DOP is in the process of overhauling the Donated Leave Program, she concluded.

Nelson Petty Jr., Commissioner of DPW stated in his testimony that the Governor recommended a total of \$17,931,763 for the agency's FY 2020 Budget from the General Fund. According to him, DPW will also receive \$500,000 from the St. John Capital Improvement Fund for maintenance and capital improvement projects on St. John; \$300,000 from the Tourism Revolving Fund to assist with carnival festivities territory-wide; and \$1,000,000 from the Anti-litter Fund to assist with roadside maintenance.

He added that they anticipate receiving a total combined funding of \$16,357,000 from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Other testifiers for DPW were Dennis Brow, Assistant Commissioner; Rueben? Deputy Commissioner, Administration; Karole McGregor, Deputy Commissioner, Transportation; Jomo McClean, Federal Highway Program Manager; James Grum, Projects Engineering Administrator; and Eran Fleming, District Engineer.

In their testimonies, the Committee was informed that additional critical equipment needs for DPW total \$1,197,776; pending road projects on St. Croix amount to \$2,395,000; and active road and fire station relocation contracts amount to \$59,448,161. In respect to the Garvee Bond Projects for road repairs, this amounts to approximately \$91 million.

Regarding the Transit Modernization Projects, the Committee was told that VITRAN continues to expand with the addition of ten (10) new medium duty buses for the fixed route fleets. Presently, there are two major constructions projects that are funded by the Federal Transit Administration. Accordingly, the new VITRAN Operations and Maintenance Facility on the island of St. Croix comes to a cost of approximately \$6.7 million and the facility on St. Thomas at a cost of \$1.4 million.

Rupert Ross Jr., Director Nominee and Chief Information Officer of the Bureau of Information Technology said their FY 2020 budget request is \$7,920,793 which represents a 9 percent reduction from FY 2019. He added that BIT requests \$621,812 in Fringe Benefits, an approximate increase, to cover the cost of Social Security, Medicare Taxes, Employer's Retirement Contribution, Health Insurance Premiums, and Workers Compensation for its current and future work force.

In respect to BIT personnel services, their request is \$1,539,215 to fund 26 positions: 18 classified and 9 unclassified. This includes the addition of 8 positions—seven (7) classified and one (1) unclassified in FY 2020. Also, there is a request to support overtime payments and implementation of performance salary increases.

According to Ross, BIT is in conversation with FEMA representatives for the complete restoration of the Bureau's mission critical tower site location. Ross said the agency is requesting a lump sum appropriation budget to allow the flexibility to effectively manage and move funds from one category to another eliminating the delay in addressing unanticipated IT urgencies.

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